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ABSTRACT

Theorists concerned with issues of social justice assert that ideology plays a substantial role in mediating perceptions of injustice and feelings of relative deprivation. To investigate the impact of feminism and religious fundamentalism on the perception of injustice in the content of sex differences in a study of traditional religious practices, 121 Jewish women were questioned about their perception of injustice, their sense of personal deprivation (limited personal opportunity for Talmudic study) and fraternal deprivation (sex differences in access to Talmudic study are unfair to women), and their desire for change in this religious area. Both positive attitudes towards feminism and low religious fundamentalism significantly increased the likelihood of a sense of personal deprivation and desire for change. Subjects scoring high on religious fundamentalism were less likely to desire increased opportunities for Talmudic study. Ideology did not impact on subjects' awareness of existing sex differences but did affect the way these differences were interpreted. The results highlight the importance of ideology as a mediator of the perception of injustice. (Author/JAC)

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WHEN IS UNEQUAL UNFAIR: THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

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The study that I am reporting today examined the relationship between belief systems and perceptions of unfairness. When access to desired opportunities is unequal, does ideology influence whether or not conditions will be perceived as unfair? For the purposes of this presentation we will define ideology as a set of valued beliefs about social reality. Ideological beliefs are distinctive because they include an 'ought' as well as an 'is'. Explicitly or implicitly, ideologies contain views about the way things are as well as views about the way things ought to be. As such ideologies can act to legitimize or delegitimize a social order (Deutsch, 1976 Lipman-Blumen, 1974). Theorists concerned with issues of social justice have asserted that ideology plays a substantial role in mediating perceptions of injustice (Deutsch, 1976) and feelings of relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966).

Relative deprivation and injustice are generally viewed as related. Relative deprivation is defined both as an emotion and a construct. Deutsch (1976), among others, identified the

[1]This paper was prepared for presentation at the meetings of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, 1981 and was part of the symposium entitled "When is Unequal Unjust: The Victim Speaks".

construct of relative deprivation as the major explanatory theme for the sense of injustice. The emotion of relative deprivation has been viewed as a state experienced by a victim of inequity (Wheeler and Zuckerman, 1977). Crosby (1976) asserts that "relative deprivation is the feeling that one has been unjustly deprived of some desired thing". Thus, the social psychological literature on relative deprivation provides us with a useful framework for studying the circumstances under which individuals perceive unequal treatment as unfair.

In a recent article, Crosby (1976) integrated the substantial literature on relative deprivation and proposed a formal model specifying the preconditions to a sense of egoistical relative deprivation. Egoistical relative deprivation refers to the state that results when an individual feels that he/she, personally, has been deprived of a desirable outcome or opportunity. Egoistic relative deprivation is contrasted with fraternal relative deprivation which occurs when an individual believes that he/she is deprived as a member of a social class or group (Crosby, 1976; Runciman, 1966). In her paper, Crosby proposed five psychological preconditions that mediate a sense of egoistic relative deprivation. These are: being aware that someone else possesses X, wanting X, believing that one is entitled to X, thinking that it is feasible to obtain X, and lacking a sense of personal responsibility for not having X. In our previous research we examined the relationship

between these psychological preconditions and what one might call egoistic perceptions of unfairness--an individual's perception that he/she personally has been treated unfairly. We found that these preconditions accounted for 43% of the variance in the perception of egoistic unfairness, (Steil and Weinglass, reference note 1). Additional findings demonstrated that a relationship also exists between these psychological preconditions and the belief that one is being treated unfairly as a member of a social group or class - a concept similar to fraternal relative deprivation. Encouraged by these results we decided to further explore the determinants of perceptions of unfairness utilizing Crosby's model and exploring the relationship between ideology, the psychological preconditions proposed by Crosbv, the perception of unfairness, and the desire for change. We examined two types of perceived unfairness: the perception that one has personally been subjected to unfair treatment, henceforth, I will refer to this as perceived egoistic unfairness and the perception that one has been subjected to unfair treatment as a member of a social group or class, henceforth I'll refer to this as perceived fraternal unfairness.

The study described below posed the following questions:

1. To what extent does ideology relate to the psychological preconditions proposed by Crosby?
2. Controlling for the psychological preconditions, is ideological position associated with perceived unfairness and the desire for social change?

3. Controlling for the perception of unfairness, is ideological position associated with the extent to which change is seen as desirable?

METHOD

Subjects - One hundred and twenty-one Orthodox Jewish women participated in a survey. This group was selected because Orthodox Jewish customs prescribe clearly different and unequal opportunities for participation in religious activities on the basis of sex; Orthodox custom requires that men study Talmud (e.g., religious legal texts) but discourages women from doing so. Pretesting indicated extensive variability in the attitudes of Orthodix Jewish women about whether or not these sex differences in access to Talmudic study are perceived as fair or unfair. This variability, then, presented a unique opportunity to study the relationship between varying levels of endorsement of distinct ideological positions, the presence or absence of the psychological preconditions, the perceptions of differences in treatment as fair or unfair, - and the desire for social change.

Each respondent completed a questionnaire which posed a series of questions that assessed the psychological preconditions proposed by Crosby; endorsement of feminist and religious ideological positions; perceptions of unfairness regarding sex differences in access to Talmudic study; and the extent to which change in existing practices was viewed as desirable.

To assess the psychological preconditions specified by Crosby we asked respondents to rate the extent of their awareness of sex differences in Talmudic study, the extent to which they deserved to be permitted to study Talmud, the feasibility of their effecting changes in the area, the extent to which a gap existed between the amount of Talmud they had studied and the amount they would like to have studied, and the extent to which they attributed this gap to circumstances beyond their control. Ratings of the extent to which respondents attributed the gap between desired and actual levels of Talmudic study to unfair treatment provided us with our measure of perceived egoistic unfairness. Respondents ratings of the extent to which sex differences in access to Talmudic study are fair or unfair to women were used to measure perceived fraternal unfairness. Finally, each respondent indicated the extent to which she favored changes in existing practices prescribing sex differences in access to Talmudic study.

Ideological measures included both a liberal feminist ideology as well as a conservative religious ideology. Each of these belief systems is relevant to an individual's stance in relation to differential treatment on the basis of sex and it seemed likely that they would have oppositional relationships. Endorsement of feminist ideology should be associated with increased perceptions of unfairness and the desire for change; religious conservatism

should be associated with diminished perceptions of unfairness and a lack of desire for change. Items assessing feminist ideology were adapted from Spence's attitudes towards women scale (Spence & Heimreich, 1978) and measured respondents' attitudes regarding sexual equality in the domestic, social, educational and occupational spheres. Religious ideology was assessed by items which measured both fundamentalism (e.g. the extent to which any changes in religious practices are viewed as a threat) and religious role differentiation, (e.g., the extent to which men and women are believed to have different or similar religious needs).

Results

First, I will discuss the relationship between ideological position and the psychological preconditions proposed by Crosby[1]. Strong endorsement of feminist views was associated with greater feelings of deservingness. Women who endorsed feminist views more strongly were more likely than those who did not to indicate that they deserved to be permitted to study Talmud. Nevertheless, when compared to women who measured lower on feminism, they were no more likely to want to study Talmud, no more likely to believe that change is feasible, no more likely to be aware of sex differences and no more likely to attribute sex differences to circumstances beyond their control. Extent of religious ideological endorsement also had no relationship to awareness levels or to attributions to

circumstances beyond one's control. However, women who were more fundamentalist, and women who believed that male and female religious roles are different, were less likely to feel that they deserved to study Talmud, less likely to want to study Talmud and less likely to believe that change is feasible than were women with lower levels of religious ideological endorsement. Thus, none of the measures of ideology was associated with acceptance of personal responsibility for not studying Talmud or on level of awareness of sex differences in the area. All three measures of ideology were associated with differences in respondents' sense of entitlement. As predicted, feminism and religiosity were associated with opposite positions. Feminism was associated with an increased sense of entitlement. Religiosity was associated with a decreased sense of entitlement. Religiosity also correlated negatively with wanting and feasibility; feminism was not associated with these variables.

The second issue I will discuss is the relationship between ideological position and the perception of unfairness and the desire for change. Each of the ideological measures correlated with at least one of the preconditions. In addition, we found that the psychological preconditions correlate significantly not only with the perception that one had been personally treated unfairly, but with perceived fraternal unfairness and the desire for change as well. Therefore we posed the following question:

Does ideology have a direct association on the perception of unfairness and the desire for change or is it associated primarily with the psychological preconditions? Controlling for the effects of the psychological preconditions we find significant correlations between feminism and perceptions of egoistic unfairness and the desire for social change. Those who endorse the feminist items more strongly are more likely to report the gap between desired and actual participation levels as due to unfair treatment and are also more likely to endorse the desirability of change. In addition, there is a trend towards greater perceived fraternal unfairness among women who endorse feminist views more highly. Therefore, we conclude that, for our sample, feminism is not only associated with a greater sense of entitlement but is also associated with whether or not a woman perceives differences in current practices as fair or unfair and the extent to which she sees change as desirable.

Turning to the relationship between fundamentalism and the dependent variable, we find that simple correlations yield significant relationships between fundamentalism and perceived fraternal unfairness and between fundamentalism and the desire for social change. However, controlling for the effects of the preconditions we find no significant correlations between fundamentalism and either of these variables. Therefore, we conclude that while fundamentalism was associated with perceptions of unfairness and

the desire for change, this effect seems to be the result of its association with the psychological preconditions.

Turning to the influence of religious role differentiation. (e.g., the extent to which respondents endorse the position that male and female religious needs are different), we find significant negative correlations between this variable and perceived egoistic unfairness, perceived fraternal unfairness and also the desire for change. Controlling for the psychological preconditions we again find significant correlations in each case. Respondents' beliefs about whether males and females have distinct religious needs appear to have a dual relationship. Women who believe that men and women have fundamentally similar religious needs are more likely to experience psychological preconditions that predispose perceiving unfairness and favoring change, they are more likely to want to study Talmud, more likely to feel entitled to study Talmud and more likely to feel that change is feasible. In addition, among women who experience these preconditions, those who feel that male and female religious needs are similar are more likely to attribute the extent of their Talmudic study to unfair treatment, more likely to feel that sex differences in Talmudic study are unfair to women and more likely to desire changes in the area.

The third and final question that I will discuss briefly addresses the relationship between ideology, perceptions of unfairness, and the desire for social change. Controlling for the

perception of unfairness, is ideology associated with the extent to which change is viewed as desirable? Our results indicate that for our sample it does. Controlling for perceptions of unfairness, we find significant relationships between each ideological variable and the desire for change. Orthodox Jewish women in our sample who feel that sex differences in Talmudic study are unfair are more likely to desire change if they endorse a feminist view, if they do not perceive changes in religious traditions as a threat, or if they feel that the religious needs of males and females are similar.

Summary and Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that information regarding ideological position can help us to understand why some people perceive unequal access to desired opportunities as unfair, while others do not. The level of endorsement of three distinct ideologies was measured: feminism, religious fundamentalism, and religious role differentiation. In each case, measures of ideological endorsement improved our ability to predict a respondent's perceptions of fairness and the extent to which she favored change. In addition, our findings show that level of ideological endorsement can help predict those individuals who despite perceiving differences as unfair, are reluctant to endorse social change. Respondents who believed that they were treated unfairly, either as individuals or as members of a social group, were less likely

to endorse change if they also endorsed ideologies that do not favor change. An Orthodox Jewish woman may feel that practices related to differential access to Talmudic study for males and females are unfair to women but not desire change because she believes it is a threat to the survival of the religious community of which she is a member.

Ideological position consistently correlated with the variables under consideration. Yet the nature of the association varied. In some cases, ideology associated directly with perceptions of fairness and the desire for change. In others, the association of ideology seemed to operate through psychological preconditions that predispose perceptions of unfairness and the desire for change. The sense of entitlement consistently correlated with ideological position, perhaps because ideology particularly addresses the issue of the rights and privileges a person believes she ought to be able to attain. On the other hand, our respondents' awareness of sex differences and the extent to which they assumed personal responsibility for the extent of their Talmudic study were not associated with ideological position. When sex differences are as clear and as institutionalized as they are for our subjects, both their existence and source may be widely perceived. Where the causes of inequality are more ambiguous, ideology may have an impact on awareness and self-blame as well.

As with most preliminary studies, ours raises more questions than it answers. Under what conditions does ideology influence our perceptions of unfairness and the desire for change and when does it influence psychological preconditions? When does ideology affect our feelings of grievance and when do our feelings of grievance affect our ideology? These are issues awaiting further research which, perhaps, some of you will join us in pursuing.

Reference Notes

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Notes

[1]Pearson correlations, Pearson partial correlations and stepwise multiple regression were used to analyze the data. All findings reported were significant at or beyond the .05 level. The number of respondents included in the analysis varies from 80 to 121. Missing data is primarily due to the fact that items assessing self-blame and perceived egoistic unfairness were contingent on the perception of a gap between actual and desired level of Talmudic study. In predicting variables other than egoistic unfairness analysis were conducted with and without subjects who perceived a gap. As results were similar, reported analyses utilized all available data.

MEAN RATINGS OF RESPONDENTS FOR FEMINISM, FUNDAMENTALISM, RELIGIOUS ROLE DIFFERENTIATION

Variable	Mean Score
*Feminism	5.9 (121)
**Fundamentalism	5.9 (108)
**Religious Role Differentiation	4.6 (113)

*All items were measured utilizing a 9 pt. scale. Higher scores on feminism indicate liberal views.

**Higher scores on these items indicate more conservative views.

TABLE I: CORRELATIONS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRECONDITIONS WITH PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS AND DESIRE FOR CHANGE

	Psychological Preconditions				
	Awareness	Wanting	Entitlement	External Attribution	Feasibility
Egoistic Unfairness	.49[d]	.29[b]	.18[a]	.44[d]	.13
Fraternal Unfairness	.31[b]	.34[d]	.19[a]	.18[a]	.01
Desire for Change	.22[b]	.51[d]	.41[d]	.36[c]	.40[d]

Significance levels:

a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$
c = $p < .001$
d = $p < .0001$

TABLE II CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IDEOLOGY, PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS AND DESIRE FOR CHANGE

	Ideology		
	Feminism	Fundamentalism	Religious Role Differentiation
Egoistic Unfairness	.21[c]	.05	.25[a]
Fraternal Unfairness	.11	.17[a]	.25[b]
Desire for Social Change	.41[c]	.36[c]	.51[c]

Significance Levels:

a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$
c = $p < .001$

TABLE III: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRECONDITIONS AND LEVEL OF IDEOLOGICAL ENDORSEMENT

	Psychological Preconditions				
Ideology	Awareness	Wanting	Entitlement	External Attribution	Feasibility
Feminism	.01	.08	.19[a]	.08	.00
Fundamentalism	.13 (.10)	.26[b]	.38[c]	.10	.20[a]
Religious Role Differentiation	.04	.28[c]	.24[b]	.06	.17[a]

Significance levels

a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$
c = $p < .001$

TABLE IV PARTIAL CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IDEOLOGY,
PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS AND THE DESIRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
CONTROLLING FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL PRECONDITIONS

	Ideology		
	Feminism	Fundamentalism	Religious Role Differentiation
Egoistic Relative Deprivation	.26[a]	.04	.21[a]
Fraternal Relative Deprivation	.10	.11	.19[a]
The Desire for Social Change	.32[b]	.10	.23[a]

Significance levels: a = $p < .05$
b = $p < .01$

TABLE VI CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND THE DESIRE FOR CHANGE CONTROLLING FOR EGOISTIC AND FRATERNAL PERCEIVED UNFAIRNESS

	Ideology		
	Feminism	Religious Role Differentiation	Fundamentalism
Desire for Change	.21 ($p < .05$)	.25 ($p < .01$)	.27 ($p < .01$)

TABLE V CORRELATIONS BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF UNFAIRNESS AND THE DESIRE FOR CHANGE

	Perceived Unfairness	
	Egoistic	Fraternal
Desire for Change	.49 ($p < .0001$)	.47 ($p < .0001$)